

Isaiah 3:24-26 Commentary

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Isaiah 3:24 Now it will [come](#) about that [instead of sweet perfume](#) there will be [putrefaction](#); [Instead of a belt, a rope](#); [Instead of well-set hair, a plucked-out scalp](#); [Instead of fine clothes, a donning of sackcloth](#) and [branding instead of beauty](#). ([NASB: Lockman](#))

English Translation of the Greek (Septuagint): And there shall be instead of a sweet smell, dust; and instead of a girdle, thou shalt gird thyself with a rope; and instead of a golden ornament for the head, thou shalt have baldness on account of thy works; and instead of a tunic with a scarlet ground, thou shalt gird thyself with sackcloth.

Amplified: And it shall come to pass that instead of the sweet odor of spices there shall be the stench of rottenness; and instead of a girdle, a rope; and instead of well-set hair, baldness; and instead of a rich robe, a girding of sackcloth; and searing [of captives by the scorching heat] instead of beauty. ([Amplified Bible - Lockman](#))

KJV: And it shall come to pass, that instead of sweet smell there shall be stink; and instead of a girdle a rent; and instead of well set hair baldness; and instead of a stomacher a girding of sackcloth; and burning instead of beauty.

NET: A putrid stench will replace the smell of spices, a rope will replace a belt, baldness will replace braided locks of hair, a sackcloth garment will replace a fine robe, and a prisoner's brand will replace beauty. ([NET Bible](#))

NJB: Then, instead of perfume, a stink; instead of belt, a rope, instead of hair elaborately dressed, a shaven

scalp, instead of gorgeous clothes, sacking round the waist, and brand marks instead of beauty. ([NJB](#))

NLT: Instead of smelling of sweet perfume, they will stink. They will wear ropes for sashes, and their well-set hair will fall out. They will wear rough sackcloth instead of rich robes. Their beauty will be gone. Only shame will be left to them. ([NLT - Tyndale House](#))

Young's Literal: And it hath been, instead of spice is muck, And instead of a girdle, a rope, And instead of curled work, baldness, And instead of a stomacher a girdle of sackcloth.

Now it will come about that **instead** of sweet perfume there will be putrefaction; **Instead** of a belt, a rope; **Instead** of well-set hair, a plucked-out scalp; **Instead** of fine clothes, a donning of sackcloth; and branding **instead** of beauty:

- instead - Is 57:9; Pr 7:17
- Plucked out - Is 22:12; Ezek 7:18; Mic 1:16
- Donning - Is 15:3; 32:9, 10, 11; Job 16:15; Je 4:8; 6:26; 48:37; 49:3; La 2:10; Ezek 27:31; Joel 1:8 Amos 8:10; Re 11:3
- burning - Is 4:4; Lv 26:16; Dt 28:22; 32:24; Re 16:9; 18:9

Divine judgment will bring about a radical contrast in the fashion and appearance of these proud women as exemplified by five "exchanges".

Instead ([08478](#)) (*tahat*) means in place of and serves here as a marker of a changed relation. **Instead** is used 5 times in this one verse! This repetition emphasizes that God's hand of judgment will bring about a complete reversal of the fortunes of these women.

Instead of sweet perfume there will be putrefaction - The **KJV** puts it bluntly "instead of sweet smell there shall be stink"! And this a result of the hand of God's judgment!

The NET Bible notes that...

The nouns for "spices" and "stench" are right next to each other in the Masoretic Text for emphatic contrast.

Calvin asks...

What may be expected to happen in those places where they are abundant? That they will excite lust and promote luxury is beyond all doubt He means, therefore, that ointments and sweet smells were abused by them in a variety of ways; for the sinful desires of men are ingenious in their contrivances, and can never be satisfied.

Putrefaction ([04716](#))(*maq*) means a stench, a bad odor or a stink. Putrefaction describes the decomposition of organic matter, producing a rotting mass with an offensive smell.

Instead of a belt, a rope - A rope brings to mind the picture of slaves being led away into captivity (cp Dt 28:36, 2Chr 29:9).

Sackcloth - This describes a coarse cloth of goat or camel's hair or of flax, hemp, or cotton. It was often worn as a sign of bitterness or mourning which would occur when their husbands fell by the sword as described in Is 3:25. See also Ge. 37:34; 1Ki 21:27; Neh 9:1; Esther 4:1; Is 15:3; 22:12; 32:11; 37:1,2; La 2:10; Ezek 27:31; Da 9:3.

Branding ([03587](#))(*kiy*) as with a branding iron which produces a physical stigma on the skin as sign of ownership by another.

Walter L Wilson writes that baldness...

is a sign that GOD had forsaken His people and left them to the will of their enemies. (See also Je 47:5; Is 15:2; Ezek 7:18). (Wilson's Dictionary of Bible Types)

Isaiah 3:25 Your **men** will **fall** by the **sword** and your **mighty ones** in **battle**. ([NASB: Lockman](#))

English Translation of the Greek (Septuagint): And thy most beautiful son whom thou lovest shall fall by the sword; and your mighty men shall fall by the sword, and shall be brought low.

Amplified: Your men shall fall by the sword, and your mighty men in battle. ([Amplified Bible - Lockman](#))

KJV: Thy men shall fall by the sword, and thy mighty in the war.

NET: Your men will fall by the sword, your strong men will die in battle. ([NET Bible](#))

NJB: Your men will fall by the sword, your warriors in battle, ([NJB](#))

NLT: Instead of smelling of sweet perfume, they will stink. They will wear ropes for sashes, and their well-set hair will fall out. They will wear rough sackcloth instead of rich robes. Their beauty will be gone. Only shame will be left to them ([NLT - Tyndale House](#))

Young's Literal: And it hath been, instead of spice is muck, And instead of a girdle, a rope, And instead of curled work, baldness, And instead of a stomacher a girdle of sackcloth.

Your men will fall by the sword and your mighty ones in battle:

- 2Chr 29:9; Je 11:22; 14:18; 18:21; 19:7; 21:9; La 2:21; Amos 9:10)

Your men - At first one might presume Isaiah is still addressing the haughty women, but the connection with the following verse supports the premise that he is now addressing the city of Jerusalem.

NET Bible Notes observes that...

The pronoun is feminine singular, suggesting personified Zion, as representative of its women, is the addressee. The reference to "her gates" in Is 3:26 makes this identification almost certain.

Your men will fall - God prophesies defeat at the hands of her enemies, a prophecy that was fulfilled in 586BC with the third and final siege of Jerusalem by the Babylonians.

Ed Young remarks that...

When the male population is destroyed, then the strength of the city will be gone, for a nation's strength consisted in her fighting army. ([Young, Ed: The Book of Isaiah - 3 Volume Commentary. Eerdmans Pub. 1992-hardcopy](#) or [Logos](#) or [Wordsearch](#))

Isaiah 3:26 And her [gates](#) will [lament](#) and [mourn](#), and [deserted](#) she will [sit](#) on the [ground](#). ([NASB: Lockman](#))

English Translation of the Greek (Septuagint): And the stores of your ornaments shall mourn, and thou shalt be left alone, and shalt be levelled with the ground.

Amplified: And [Jerusalem's] gates shall lament and mourn [as those who wail for the dead]; and she, being ruined and desolate, shall sit upon the ground. ([Amplified Bible - Lockman](#))

KJV: And her gates shall lament and mourn; and she being desolate shall sit upon the ground.

NET: Her gates will mourn and lament; deprived of her people, she will sit on the ground. ([NET Bible](#))

NJB: and her gates will moan and mourn; she will sit on the ground, deserted. ([NJB](#))

NLT: The gates of Jerusalem will weep and mourn. The city will be like a ravaged woman, huddled on the ground. ([NLT - Tyndale House](#))

Young's Literal: And lamented and mourned have her openings, Yea, she hath been emptied, on the earth she sitteth!

And her gates will lament and mourn, and deserted she will sit on the ground

- her gates - Je 14:2; La 1:4
- Deserted - Is 47:1; Job 2:8,13; La 2:10; Ezek 26:16; Lk 19:44)

Her gates - Jerusalem is personified as a destitute woman who sits mourning the empty city whose male population has been slaughtered. When the glory of the Lord departed the gates of the cities (cp Ezek 10:19-note; see Departure of the Glory of

Jehovah), these same gates which were once sites of song and rejoicing, will become scenes of great groaning and mourning.

Lament ([0578](#)) (**'anah**) to mourn aloud or groan out of sorrow which emphasizes the emotional distress of the situation. Webster says to lament means to mourn aloud, to wail to express sorrow or deep regret.

The only other use of **'anah** in the OT is...

And the fishermen will **lament** (**'anah**; Lxx = stenazo = sigh, groan, involuntary expression in face of undesirable circumstances), And all those who cast a line into the Nile will mourn, And those who spread nets on the waters will pine away. (Is 19:8)

Walter L Wilson writes that **gates** which **lament**...

represent the utter desolation of Jerusalem. She was to be destroyed by her enemies and the gates burned with fire. (Wilson's Dictionary of Bible Types)

Mourn ([056](#)) (**abal**) means to bewail and describes mourning rites for the dead but is often used figuratively as in this verse and in Isaiah 24:4 where "The land mourns".

The **Septuagint (LXX)** translates **abal** with **pentheo** (see word study) which speaks of grieving "with a grief which so takes possession of the whole being that it cannot be hid." (Trench)

Abal - 38v in the OT - Gen. 37:34; Exod. 33:4; Num. 14:39; 1 Sam. 6:19; 15:35; 16:1; 2 Sam. 13:37; 14:2; 19:1; 1 Chr. 7:22; 2 Chr. 35:24; Ezr. 10:6; Neh. 1:4; 8:9; Job 14:22; Isa. 3:26; 19:8; 24:4, 7; 33:9; 66:10; Jer. 4:28; 12:4, 11; 14:2; 23:10; Lam. 2:8; Ezek. 7:12, 27; 31:15; Dan. 10:2; Hos. 4:3; 10:5; Joel 1:9f; Amos 1:2; 8:8; 9:5 and is rendered in the **NAS** as -- caused lamentations(1), grieve(1), grieved(1), lament(1), mourn(13), mourned(7), mourning(3), mourns(10), pretend to be a mourner(1), went into mourning(1).

Clarke notes that...

Sitting on the ground was a posture that denoted mourning and deep distress.

In **Lamentations** Jeremiah describes a fulfillment of Isaiah's prophecy...

The elders of the daughter of Zion **sit on the ground**, they are silent. They have thrown dust on their heads; They have girded themselves with sackcloth. The virgins of Jerusalem have bowed their heads to the ground. (La 2:10)

Deserted she will sit - The Hebrew literally reads "she will be empty, on the ground she will sit."

Deserted ([05352](#)) (**naqah**) conveys the sense of to be emptied and so to be poured out, in this case referring to Jerusalem which has become emptied of people.

The **Septuagint (LXX)** uses **hedaphizo** meaning to be leveled or razed to the ground and so completely destroyed (which would explain why she is deserted).

Ed Young writes that...

There is extant a coin from [the time of the Roman emperor] Vespasian which pictures the conquered Jerusalem as a dejected woman sitting under a palm tree, a soldier standing before her, and which bears the inscription Judaea capta, or devicta. Jerusalem alone.

Clarke describing such a coin writes that on one side was...

tall palm tree, emblem of the land of Palestine, the emperor standing on the left, close to the tree, with a trophy behind him; on the right, Judea under the figure of a female captive sitting on the ground, with her head resting on her hand, the elbow on her knee, weeping.